

### David Fulton's *Hanover*

African American David Fulton offered the first literary response to the public memory of the riot. Born in Fayetteville, North Carolina, Fulton moved to Wilmington during Reconstruction. He began his writing career as a journalist for the black-owned *Record* under the *nom de plume* Jack Thorne. In 1887, he moved to New York City, where he was a porter for the Pullman Palace Car Company. From his experiences as a porter, Fulton developed his first published work, *Recollections of a Sleeping Car Porter* (1892). In 1900, Fulton published *Hanover, or: The Persecution of the Lowly: A Story of the Wilmington Massacre*, a thinly veiled work of fiction that attempted to expose the realities of the riot.<sup>5</sup>

Fulton employed several devices to indicate the accuracy of *Hanover*. The novel opens with an Associated Press report of the race riot, and the introduction presents a brief history of Wilmington. Fulton appropriated the identities of principal figures in Wilmington. Alexander Manly, Armond Scott, William Henderson, and George Z. French are among those mentioned by name; Fulton only changed the names of the leading white conspirators. Fulton also included a letter from Mrs. Adelaide Peterson (likely a pseudonym), who provides the reader with a first-hand black perspective of the violence. Despite these efforts, *Hanover* failed to challenge the popular interpretation of events.

In the introduction, Fulton dismisses cries of “NEGRO DOMINATION” by citing the superior number of white men in government offices and offers a theory regarding the conspiracy behind the Wilmington Race Riot. He proposes that the leading men of Wilmington devised the plot with the aid of whites from neighboring states and \$30,000 in firearms. The semi-fictional text explores this theory in more detail by presenting a series of vignettes around the city. The Colonel, representing Alfred Moore Waddell, identifies the problem facing Wilmington when he observes that the city government is controlled by “[t]he Negro and the ‘low white’ ... holding positions in the city government that rightfully belong to the first families who are better qualified to hold said positions and more entitled to remunerations.”<sup>6</sup> Teck Pervis, the leader of the poor whites of Wilmington, joins this elitist revolution, having been swayed by talk of black lust for their daughters, and serve as “[t]he cat’s paw – the tool of the aristocrat, he stands ready to do the dirty work of lynching, burning, and intimidation.”<sup>7</sup> Fulton challenged the popular account of the riot, claiming that the Red Shirts acted on the orders of Wilmington’s elite, executing their plan to deadly perfection. He exposed the Democratic campaign’s manipulation of fears of black sexuality.

Fulton exposes the hypocrisy of this tactic in his treatment of the mulatto Molly Pierrepont. He introduces her by describing white violations of the color line. Challenging the image of the black beast rapist, Fulton suggests that the more accurate image is the African American man “afraid to defend his own home” from white men intent upon “the destruction of the Negro woman.” Pierrepont, the daughter of a mulatto slave brutally raped by her own white father, has rejected her African American heritage and chosen to be the mistress of white

<sup>5</sup> William Andrews, “Jack Thorne [David Bryant Fulton],” in *Dictionary of American Negro Biography*, ed. by Rayford Logan and Michael Winston (New York: Norton, 1982): pg. 589-590.

<sup>6</sup> Thorne, *Hanover*, pg. 9-10, 17.

<sup>7</sup> Thorne, *Hanover*, pg. 26.